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OCTOBER 3.

The President, Dr. RUSCHENBERGER, in the chair.

Thirty-six members present.

A paper entitled "On the Extrusion of the Seminal Products in Limpets, with some Remarks on the Phyllogeny of *Docoglossa*," by W. H. Dall, was presented for publication.

*Bituminous Sediment of the Schuylkill River.*—Prof. LEIDY remarked that he had been recently invited by Dr. Josua Lindahl, Secretary of the Swedish Commission, who had at his command a small steamer, to make the experiment of dredging in the Schuylkill River. He had accepted the invitation in the expectation of finding abundance of the smaller aquatic animals, such as he had sparingly detected on stones near shore below low-water mark, just below Fairmount dam. The dredging was tried near the mouth of the Schuylkill, but no living thing whatever was drawn up, as the mud and sand were black and saturated with bituminous oil. This latter fact was unexpected, and would appear to illustrate the mode of formation of more ancient bituminous shales. The refuse of the city gas-works, and probably of some coal-oil refineries, run into the river. The oils appear to have an affinity for the particles of clay carried down the river, and, precipitating, become bituminous sediments at the bottom. In the same manner oils, from a profusion of decomposing animals, and probably also plants, supplied the sedimentary muds of ancient shales. Many even of the lowest plants contain abundance of oil, and it may be observed in such forms as *Vaucheria*, *Diatomes*, etc.

*Fertilization in Beans.*—Mr. MEEHAN observed that in all the discussions on the injurious effect of close breeding in flowers, and the consequent theories of cross fertilization, nearly all the arguments were drawn from structure. We are asked to note certain arrangements, and then to believe that certain results must follow. He preferred to watch the plants in their actions, and in the results of their actions when excluded from external agencies, believing it the more practical way and preferable to the theoretical one. One of his friends who thought he was wrong in limiting insect agency to a few plants, and in questioning the injury from vegetable close breeding, had been giving for some months past a series of articles in proof of his side, which was the generally accepted view. Of course the position of his friend was entitled to all the benefit to be derived from structural arrangement; but when he referred to actual behavior in plants, it came within the province he had marked out for himself. In the last paper there was an instance of this kind. After noting how the flowers of

*Phaseolus*, the common bean, were formed; and the supposed impossibility of fertilization by its own pollen, the paragraph concludes as follows: "The *machinery* tells its own story plainly. The confirmation is familiar to all who know beans and their facility of mixing when different varieties are grown together." Mr. M. said he claimed to "know beans" for thirty years past; and had grown large numbers of varieties side by side, saving seed from them and re-sowing, and had never known a single case of admixture from this close proximity. The various kinds of both Beans and Peas in cultivation were in all cases evolutions, or, as would be commonly said, "sports or accidents," or were the results of actual manipulations by skilful seed raisers. He had no hesitation in saying that his friend was utterly wrong in his impression of the facts; that he did not "know beans;" and the fact that beans would not mix, though so close together, and so freely visited by bees, was an excellent argument against instead of for the generally received theories of insect cross fertilization.

*Fruit of Akebia quinata.*—Mr. THOMAS MEEHAN exhibited a fruit from a plant grown by Mr. W. Canby, of Wilmington, Del., who had three fruits from two old plants, and they were the first fruits he had heard of, after twenty years of extensive cultivation in America. In China and Japan, where it is a native, it is regarded as an edible fruit, and, inferring from its having a vernacular name, *Fugi-Kadsura-Akebi*, the fruit is probably common there. Attempts had been made to induce fruitfulness here by cross fertilization, but they had failed. It was not, therefore, a question of fertilization, but one of nutrition. The fruit is as large and of the appearance of a papaw (*Asimina triloba*), but opens on one side as in a follicle of *Asclepias*, disclosing the long column of parietal seeds. Mr. M. pointed out by it the difference between the Lardizabalaceae and Menispermaceae orders.

*Note on Phallus fœtidus.*—Mr. MEEHAN exhibited specimens of what he supposed to be a variety of this fungus. It was very rare with him, the last time it had appeared on his grounds was seven years ago. Its brilliant scarlet color and strong fetid odor would have attracted attention had it been in existence during that time. It was doubtful if any existed in the vicinity, and it was an interesting question whether the spores or mycelium had been in the ground all that while, or whether it had been recently brought as a spore in the atmosphere. But the main point he wished to draw attention to was the attraction the fetid plant had for meat flies. They abounded on the plants. The common toad plant of green-houses (*Stapelia variegata*) attracted these in the same way, and it was said to be a scheme to aid the plant in cross fertilization, the stench attracting the flies, and inducing them to deposit eggs under the impression it was rotten meat; though what benefit it